

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 06215 091527Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3004

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6215

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG

SUBJECT:ISRAELI ACTIONS IN GULF OF SUEZ

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 6187; (B) TEL AVIV 6112

1. IN CONVERSATION THIS MORNING EVRON (MFA) ASKED THE ACTING DCM IF WE HAD YET RECEIVED A REACTION FROM WASHINGTON TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR TOON ON SEPTEMBER 8. WE SAID THAT WE HAD NOT, BUT EXPECTED INSTRUCTIONS SHORTLY. WHEN ASKED IF HE HAD GIVEN ANY FURTHER THOUGHT TO HIS SUGGESTED SOLUTION ADVANCED DURING HIS TALK WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON SEPTEMBER 6 (PARA 5, REF B), EVRON REPLIED THAT HE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT HIS SUGGESTION HAD POSSIBILITIES. HE ADDED THAT WE "UNDOUBTEDLY NOTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SPOKE ALONG THE SAME LINE" YESTERDAY WHEN HE MET WITH THE AMBASSADOR.

2. AS STATED IN REF B, I BELIEVE EVRON'S SUGGESTION SHOULD BE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. RABIN, WHILE NOT USING THAT PRECISE FORUMLATION, MADE CLEAR THAT HE IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT SOME DRILLING ACROSS THE MEDIAN LINE IN PRE-1967 CONCESSION AREAS. HE IS PROBABLY AWARE THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAVE PLANS FOR DRILLING AND PRODUCTION AT ADDITIONAL SITES EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE AND HE WANTS TO MAKE CERTAIN THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE LIMITS OF ANY INTERIM AGREEMENT REACHED WITH U.S. IN ANY EVENT I AM FAIRLY SURE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD AGREE TO AN EVRON-TYPE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 06215 091527Z

ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY AMOCO IS PERMITTED TO DRILL AT THE

DISPUTED SITE 304.1 WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER OPERATIONS EAST OF MEDIAN LINE UNLESS A NEW AGREEMENT IS REACHED. I SEE LITTLE PROSPECT OF ACHIEVING MUCH MORE THAN THIS IN THE SHORT TERM.

3. THE ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MEDIANLINE HAS HARDENED OVER RECENT MONTHS, AS AMOCO'S OPERATIONS ADVANCED FROM PRELIMINARY SURVEY WORK TO THE ACTUAL DRILLING STAGE. UNTIL LATE LAST YEAR AMOCO HAD, OF COURSE, BEEN ABLE TO CONDUCT SEISMIC SURVEYS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE MEDIAN LINE WITH VERY LITTLE INTERFERENCE. ANOTHER FACTOR MAY WELL BE ISRAEL'S OWN EFFORTS TO FIND OIL IN THE GULF. FINALLY, AS ALLON HAS STRESSED, THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE THE EGYPTIAN PRESSURE ON AMOCO HAS POLITICAL PURPOSE AS WELL AS ECONOMIC.

4. I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE A RESPONSE THAT I CAN GIVE TO RABIN ON THE QUESTION OF AMOCO'S SEPTEMBER 21 DEADLINE (PARA 7, REF A). DOES FORCE MAJEURE PROVIDE AN OUT FOR AMOCO?

5. IN THE FORTHCOMING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS, FIRST ITEM OF BUSINESS SHOULD BE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON VALID CONCESSIONS OUTSTANDING, IDENTIFYING AREAS INVOLVED AND SPECIFYING WHEN CONCESSION WERE MADE. I RECOMMEND THAT WE THEN REQUEST THE RIGHT TO DRILL AT SITE 304.13 (CAIRO 11816) AS WELL AS SITE 304.1, STRESSING (IF TRUE) THAT THE ENTIRE BLOCK LIES IN A CONCESSION GRANTED BEFORE 1967. IF THE ISRAELIS PROVE UNYIELDING, WE COULD THEN SETTLE FOR 304.1 WHICH WOULD AT LEAST PROVIDE A COOLING OFF PERIOD.
TOON

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